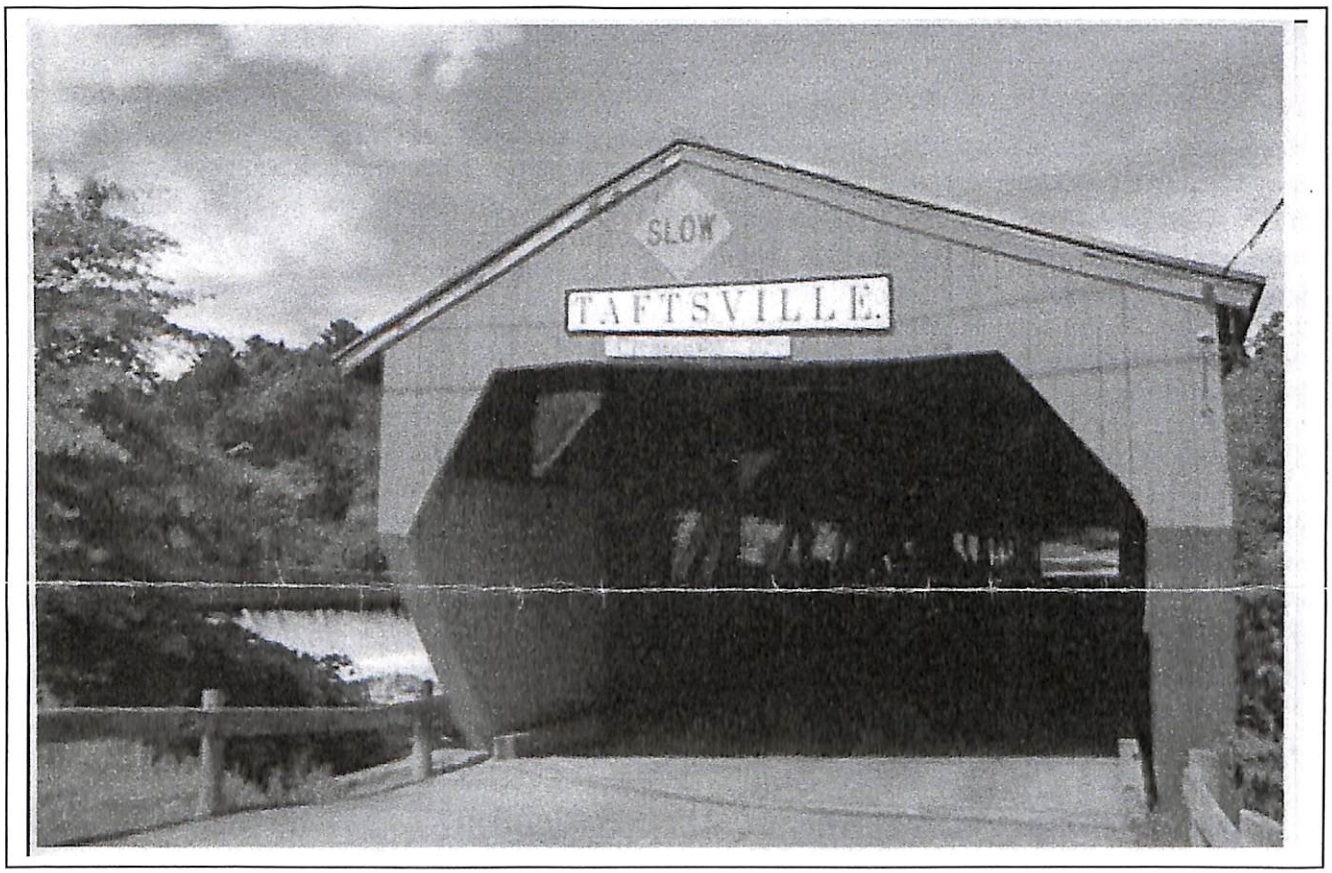
TAFT TALK

No. 53 *Newsletter of the Taft Family Association* Nov 2007



Our featured Taft location this newsletter is Taftsville, VT with its covered bridge (YourPhotos.boston.com).

Spotlight on Taftsville, VT

The hamlet of Taftsville, VT is nestled in the Ottauquechee River Valley, Windsor County on Rte 4 between the popular and beautiful towns of Woodstock and Quechee, quintessential Vermont villages. Although quite small, about 130 residents, it is an affluent and picturesque community and affords residents and visitors with access to downhill skiing (Suicide Six), cross country skiing, hiking, canoeing, fishing, golf, tennis and ballooning. Antique shopping and fine dining abound. Nearby are not only the town of Woodstock, but also the Marsh-Billings National Historic Park, Quechee Gorge State Park and North Hartland Lake. The Billings Farm, Dartmouth's Hood Museum, the Corvette Museum and the Calvin Coolidge Homestead are a short drive away. Several lovely farmhouses provide B&B opportunities. The Taftsville Mennonite Chapel was developed in 1960 in eastern PA and many of the first members were conscientious objectors who were assigned by the government to work at a nearby hospital as an alternative to military service.

See Taftsville p 3

Family Updates:

Our Family in Arizona

Recently we received a lovely letter from our member, Grace Johns, who wrote about her family:

"Let me bring the Association records up to date a little from out here in Arizona.

"My Hurley grandchildren are grown up now. Audrey is a librarian; Ellisa has graduated from West Point and served two years overseas, one in Iraq, and one in Afghanistan; Nathaniel, a specialist in the army, was in Iraq while Ellisa was in Afghanistan. He was wounded when their vehicle was hit by one of those IEDs but is now back home and hiking the Appalachian Trail. The youngest Hurley, Abigail, spent a year as an exchange student in Japan and is now a student at Kent State University.

"Kirsten (Johns) Fuller and her husband Kenney have adopted a baby girl, Josie, born in 2005 to go with their 11 and 9 year old sons Steven and Adam.

"Christopher Caddell and his partner, Malia, have a brand new son Jonas Aiden b 20 Jun 2007."

What a varied and dedicated family this is – it's a pleasure to hear about extended families, especially when they are Taft descendants!!

Grace (Helm) Johns is the daughter of Morton Helm (Susan Taft, Silas, Cruff, Silas, Stephen, Benjamin, Robert) Taft.

And Our Family In Pennsylvania

Louise Taft Plumley has often written to our historian and our secretary, and we appreciate all her information. She lets us know the following:

"We don't hold our Taft reunion anymore. I have one aunt left on my Dad's side: Mary Taft Kitchen. I lost Aunt Eloise Taft. She was my Dad's half brother's wife. His name was Harland (Bill we called him) and he passed away several years ago. She had a birthday Nov 9 same as mine. She came to work for my parents when I was born. So we had many years celebrating "our birthday". She was 16 when I was born in 1930.

"My family and I are doing ok. Our daughter Sharon Plumley lost her job in February because the place left our area but with another business coming to town we hope she gets hired. (We do too!)

"Gene Seeley is a cousin of mine: his grandmother and my grandmother were sisters, his grandfather Arch Taft and my grandfather Charles Taft were half brothers – they were all wonderful people."

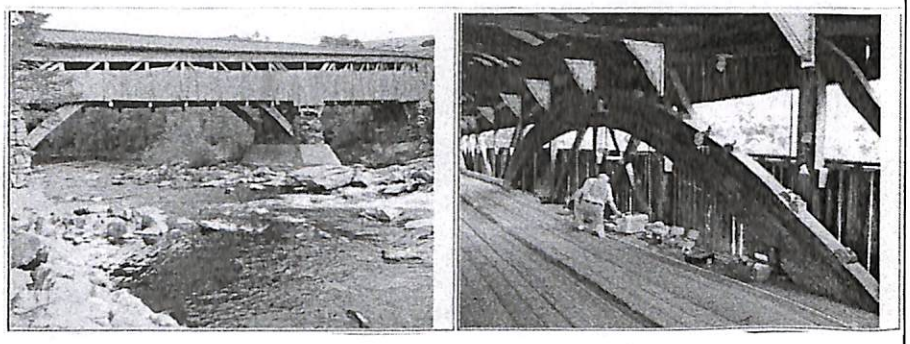
Arch Taft (1871) and Charles Enos Taft (1878) were sons of Charles Laban Taft. Arch married Sarah Jane Lattimer (b 1877) and Charles Enos married Mary Rosalyn Lattimer (1875) both daughters of Alexander and Sally Jane (King) Lattimer. Charles Laban Taft was the son of Laban (Jesse, Mijamin, Nathan, Mijamin, Benjamin, Robert) Taft.

Taftsville (cont from p 1)

The downtown district is listed as "The Taftsville Country Store" which not only provides over 40 different VT cheeses and many maple products but also serves as the post office. The original wooden floors, tin ceilings and brick chimney have been retained and old farm tools and collectibles line the walls. This brick building was built in 1840 by Daniel Taft & Sons.

For those interested in more information please read "Taftsville Tales" by Pearl G Watson.

Taftsville was settled in 1793 and was named for the family of Seth Taft, settlers of the area (see below).



In the summer of 2002 an agreement between Historic American Engineering Record and the JHU Dept of Civil Engineering allowed HAER to begin documenting America's covered wooden bridges. In 2003 a Hopkins team performed full-scale load testing on the Taftsville Bridge, a multiple kingpost bridge with supplemental arches, built in 1836. It is the third oldest covered bridge in Vermont and the second longest. (credits: Ben Schafer/ Taftsville Tales)

The Seth Taft Family of Taftsville, VT

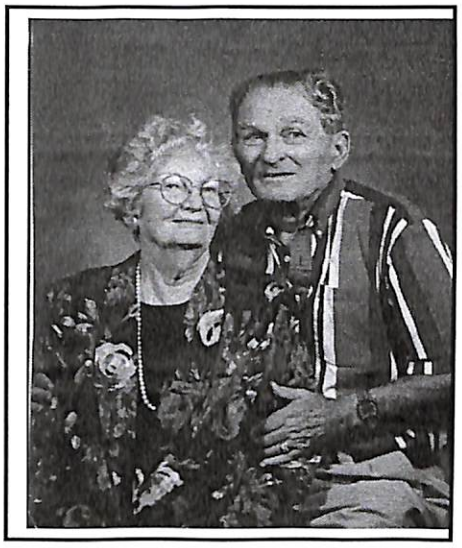
Seth (Stephen, Benjamin, Robert) Taft was born 1739 in Uxbridge, Worcester, MA and died 9 Dec 1781 in Mendon, MA. His gravestone is located in the Chestnut Hill Burying Ground (Blackstone). He married Jemima Angell 20 Mar 1761 Smithfield, RI the daughter of John and Lydia (Winsor) Angell, who remarried 29 Oct 1789 at Mendon Charles Angell of Smithfield, RI. His children included Prudence, Lovina/Levina, Rhoda, Naomi, Stephen, Hannah, Benjamin, Seth, Daniel and Henry. Although Seth Taft did not live in Vermont all of his children except Naomi and Henry did, living in Winsor County.

The daughters: Prudence married about 1793 Solomon Emmons and moved to Woodstock, VT. Rhoda married 7 Apr 1785 in Smithfield, RI Daniel Marsh probably of Woodstock, VT where they lived. Hannah married 14 Jun 1799 in Hartland, VT Elisha Perkins of Woodstock and lived in Woodstock and Barnard.

The sons: Stephen born Dec 1767 Mendon, MA married Patience Perkins. Benjamin born 1773 Mendon died about 1810 in VT and married before 1794 Thankful (? Washburn). Benjamin was a blacksmith and removed to Chittenden County. Seth b 1775 Mendon d 22 Jul 1811 Taftsville, VT and married Lucy Emerson. Daniel b 22 Dec 1778 Mendon d 30 Aug 1857 Woodstock, VT. Daniel married first in 1801 Thankful Wilson, the daughter of Jedidiah Wilson. He married second 12 Oct 1815 in Woodstock Mary Sampson.

Daniel settled in Taftsville in 1794 as an apprentice to his brother Stephen in the scythe making business. In 1802 he acquired a part interest in the business and in 1804 he and his brother Seth bought out Stephen. Seth's death from lockjaw resulted from stepping upon a nail on occasion of the destruction of the factory by fire. After Seth's death in 1811, Daniel became the sole owner and rebuilt the shop. For nearly fifty years Daniel was the head of the prosperous business, with receipts for a number of years amounting to over twenty thousand dollars annually. He was honest, industrious and highly respected and in 1834 represented the town of Woodstock in the legislature, besides holding numerous other positions of public trust. He was also an extensive landowner. (research by Neil Todd and information from "Taftsville Tales").

The book "Taftsville Tales" gives a detailed account of this family, beginning with Stephen, the first of the line to settle at Taftsville in 1793 and continuing with Daniel's son Daniel's descendants, the last of the line to live there.



Bob and June will celebrate 60 years of family life together on 11 Mar 2008

– ***Congratulations***!!

Robert Everett Newell

In June Bob wrote to Berneta that he would be 84 in July 2007 (Happy Belated Birthday!!) He mentions that his wife June's sister lives in Williamsburg, MA but they are pretty much homebodies these days. He included a photo (see above) of June and Bob as well as "All the Relatives" taken in 2005 at New Smyrna Beach at their condo. He is currently a notary public for the state of Florida.

Bob enlisted from Northampton, MA in World War II in the US Naval Service. At the time he worked for A. H. Rhoades Co of Goshen, MA and was listed as a farmer. He served as an electrician's Mate Second Class at the Naval Training Station in NM; at the Philippines Training Base in the Solomons; on the USS LCI (Landing Craft) (L) 600, and on the USS Haven (AH-120 (a US Hospital ship noted for its service in the Pacific Theatre especially when she arrived off the destroyed city of Nagasaki and brought on board a group of allied ex-prisoners of war, some of them suffering from the effects of the atomic blast). Bob received the WW II Victory Medal, the American Theatre Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre Medal and the Purple Heart.

He included a brief comment on the sinking of a ship in 45 minutes in an area of mines – we hope that he will fill us in with more information on this and his tour of duty in a future newsletter.

Bob also indicated he had been in contact with a certified lineage specialist in 1987 who gave him a chart comparing his two Taft lines, one through his grandmother Flora May Taft Newell and the other through his grandfather Herbert C. Newell. The genealogist also told him that he too was a Taft descendant and that they were 8th cousins, and both fifth cousins three times removed from the president.

Robert Everett Newell was born 2 Jul 1923 in Springfield, MA the son of Herbert Clinton and Florence May (Taft) Newell.

Herbert Clinton Newell was born 1867 in Connecticut (CT/CT/CT according to 1900 and 1910 CT Census) the son of Timothy Wolcott and Emma A Newell. Timothy Wolcott Newell was the son of David Lawson Newell and Caroline Crawford who was the daughter of Ingoldsby Work Crawford and Rhoda (Daniel, Daniel, Robert) Taft.

Florence May Taft Newell was born May 1870 in Connecticut (CT/RI/PA according to 1900 and 1910 CT Census) the daughter of Rodolphus A (George Washington, Moses, Nathan, Mijamin, Benjamin, Robert) Taft.

Mary Florence Taft, MD

Mary Florence Taft was born 19 Jun 1853 in Putney, VT the daughter of Charles Preston and Mary Jane Lund (Hutchins) Taft and died 8 Sep 1927 aged 74 years in Cambridge, MA. After finishing her high school education in Somerville, MA, she worked four years in the library at Harvard. Mary F. Taft first studied education and founded a private day care in Newport, RI. She then graduated from Boston University School of Medicine in 1886, aged 33, where she had been a student of Dr. William P. Wesselhoeft. She began her medical career in Waterbury, CT. Several years later she became a professor of gynecology at Hering Medical College, Chicago, IL and was listed as an officer of the first faculty (along with Charles H. Taft, A.B, DMD, professor of dental surgery) where she met Profs. James Tyler Kent and Henry C. Allen. Mary F. Taft was a teacher of Material Medical Homeopathic for post-graduate education as established by the American Foundation for Homeopathy and for 36 years was a member of the International Hahnemannian Assn., writing many articles on homeopathy. She moved to Boston and was listed the Newton census for 1900 and 1910 at 332 and 340 Walnut St. By 1920 she was in Cambridge on Charles River Rd, both her office and home.

She was a "Disciple of Emmanuel Swedenborg" and had an extensive library both homeopathic and religious. Her two favorite books were "Arcane Heaven" by Swedenborg and the "Organon of the Rational Art of Healing" by Samuel F. C. Hahnemann. Although no longer considered mainstream medical care, homeopathy did treat women equally and allowed women on their faculty and among their students., Still Mary Florence Taft was among very few women to attend medical school in this era and to achieve such a level of success in her profession.

Charles Preston was the son of Preston Washington (Willard, Samuel, Israel, Robert, Robert) Taft.

(sources: A Vital Force: Women in American Homeopathy" by Anne Taylor Kirshcmann; "Biography of Dr. Mary Florence Taft by Dr. R. Seror)

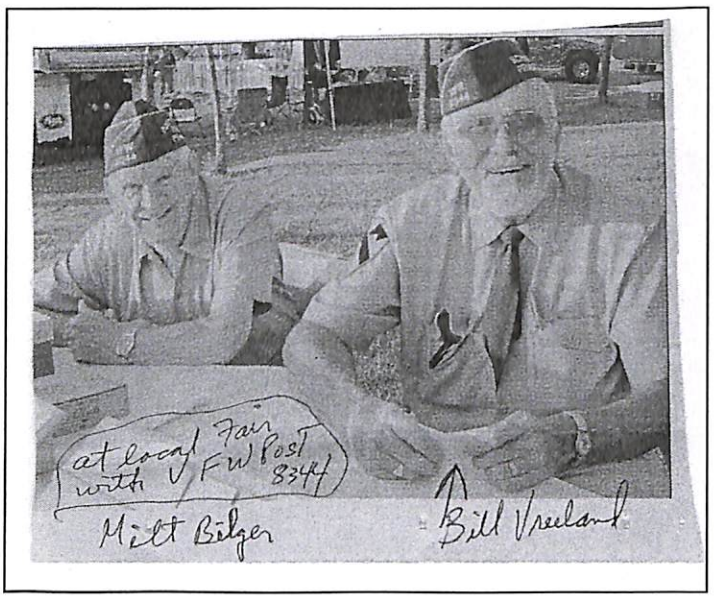
Homeopathy

According to the "History of Homeopathy..." by William Harvey King, MD Homeopathy is defined as "A system for treating disease based on the administration of minute doses of a drug that in massive amounts produces symptoms in healthy individuals similar to those of the disease itself."

Charles H Taft, A.B., DMD, professor of dental surgery at Hering Medical College, Chicago, IL.

Charles was the corresponding secretary for the Odontological Society of Pennsylvania in 1891. Among his work he wrote a paper on 'Injurious Effects of Amalgam Fillings, Medical Advance" to the Mass dental Society on 8 Jun 1893 about the bad effects of mercury fillings.

Charles H. Taft, DMD, was the brother of Mary Florence Taft, MD and the son of Charles Preston (Preston Washington, Willard, Samuel, Israel, Robert, Robert) Taft.



New member Wiliam Otis Vreeland (right) and friend, Milt Bilger, at the local fair with the VFW Post 8344.

We would love to hear from you - photos, stories, you name it, we are interested. And better yet how about writing an article for this newsletter - no financial reward but

Welcome to our new member - William Otis Vreeland

Bill found our association online and then chatted with our secretary / treasurer, Berneta. He told her he is looking for any Taft members in his area (Coplay, PA). William served in the 1st Cavalry Division in the Korean War and feels very proud to have served his country.

This August he sent us information on his mother and said she would have been so pleased to be included in the Taft family newsletter.

Bill's mother was Lalien Taft born 4 Apr 1890 Webster, Worcester, MA (VR) the daughter of Otis H Taft, clerk, of Webster, and Emma E. Richard also of Webster.

He states "I don't remember my grandmother, but grandfather Otis Taft was old when I was young. That's how I got my middle name Otis."

Lalien was the daughter of Otis Harrison (Harrison Gray Otis, Otis, Silas, Israel, Robert, Robert) Taft.

Retrieving data from the zillions of sources available now – a (very brief) case study:

Becky Grothe sent Neil a notice of an old obituary she found in her email files.

"William H. Taft, Tuesday, 7 May 1940 of 7017 Bryn Mawr Ave., beloved son of the late John and Amilia Taft, fond husband of Elizabeth nee Salvor; brother of Florence, John, Carl, Ruth and Mrs. Esther Fuller. Burial in St. Lucas Cemetery. (information Monroe 3877).

One thing that is interesting is to start with only this snippet of information - no dates listed other than the death date, but lots of family members. Sometimes it goes nowhere until you have more information. But in this case we started with our Taft databases with Amelia Taft ("William H" is way too common a name in our family line, and let's not even talk about "John"). We found an Amelia M. Stanley born in 1875 who married John Whitcomb Taft (b 1874). Next we looked up John Whitcomb Taft (1874) and saw that this John was born in Illinois and lived in Kansas and Oklahoma. This looked promising. We next decided to try the Oklahoma census for 1900 and found John and Amelia with a daughter Florence. Then looking at the 1910 census there was the family for John W (c1875) and his wife Amelia M (c1875) and children Florence (c1899), John M. (c1901) Ester A. (c1902), Carl S. (c1906), and William H. (c1909) in Blue Grass Twp, Beaver Co, OK. The 1920 census added Ruth (c1913). According to the WW I draft registration card for John Whitcomb Taft his wife was Mary Amelia.

There is more to do of course, but we have been able to connect William H. Taft to his family. William H Taft was the son of John Whitcomb (Wallace Whitcomb, Aquila Ramsdell, James Sibley, Nathan, Daniel, Daniel, Robert) Taft and Amelia Mary "Amelia/Amilia" Stanley.

In Memoriam

Marjorie L Congdon

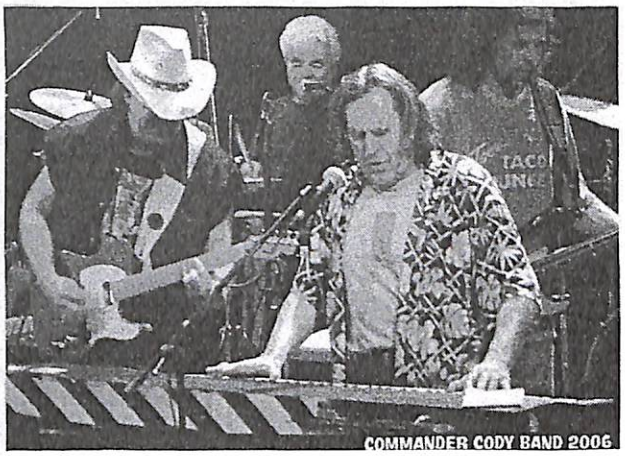
Marjorie L. Congdon, 58, was a life-long resident of Mendon who died peacefully at the home of her sister on Wednesday, July 11, 2007.

Margie was well-known to the Taft Family Association – she was our indispensable cashier for the penny sale. Her good humor and outgoing personality won her many friends at our reunions and throughout her community. Although wheelchair-bound, she could be seen outdoors around town in any season and used her talents to help her church by typing up their annual reports. One of her personal passions was chronically the birds she would see each year near her barn.

Margie was born in Woonsocket, RI on September 6, 1948, the daughter of Robert Phillips and Helen Augusta (Taft) Congdon. She attended Mendon Public Schools and was a 1967 graduate of the Massachusetts Hospital School, Canton, MA. She was active in the 1st Parish Unitarian Church of Mendon, where she was a lifetime member. In addition to her parents, with whom she resided, Margie also leaves one sister, Priscilla T. (Congdon) Koopman of Northbridge; one nephew, Jeff T. Koopman of Northbridge; two nieces, Dawn M. Le-francois of Uxbridge and Shelby L. Taylor of Parkman, ME; two grand nephews and four grand-nieces; three aunts, as well as many cousins and friends (Worcester Telegram 13 Jul 2007).

Margie was buried in the Swandale Cemetery in Mendon. At her request in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the 1st Parish Unitarian Church of Mendon, 13 Maple St. Mendon , MA 01756.

Marjorie L Congdon's mother was Helen Augusta Taft the daughter of Clarence Augustus (Austin Augustus, Amariah, Jotham, Caleb, Daniel, Robert) Taft.



Our cousins have fascinating careers:

To those of you who are children of the 60s, you may have heard of the "Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen" band. This band had its start in Ann Arbor, MI at the University of Michigan where George Frayne (aka Commander Cody) was an art major - in fact most of the musicians had not only BAs but masters degrees as well, ranging from art to aeronautical science. They traveled to San Francisco and were smack in the middle of the musical dynamics of the era. Over the years they created many albums/ CDs and played in innumerable gigs around the country and the world. "Hot Rod Lincoln" was their most famous song although aficionados of the band have many more favorites. Their musical style has ranged from rock n' roll, truckin, country, to rockabilly sound. Currently the band is having a renewed popularity and has morphed into "The Commander Cody Band." His band was featured in a study on the music industry in "Star Making Machinery" and had 15 pages devoted to their early group in "White Man's Blues."

In addition to his musical talents on the keyboard, George is well-known for his acrylic artwork and his sculptures. His artwork was featured at the opening of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame a few years ago and in several art books including "Star Art." George's brother Chris was another accomplished artist whose poster work for the band was displayed in "The Art of Rock." Chris also designed many murals, before his unfortunate early death.

Both Chris and George were the benefits of not only genetics but environment, since their parents George W. Frayne III and Katherine Webster (Jones) Frayne are creative and renowned artists themselves. Their mother, Katherine, is the daughter of John Seth and Marguerite Webster (Taft) Jones. Her grandfather was Henry Spurr Tafft (Smith, Mijamin, Mijamin, Benjamin, Robert) and her grandmother, Katherine Edmands Webster, was descended from the Robert and Joseph Taft lines.

Taft Family Association Officers

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Annual dues of $8 per family are due and payable each year on or before June 1, 2006.
(Your dues are paid through the year on your mailing label.)